

Welcome to the New Let's Talk

THE FOH EAP IS PLEASED TO INTRODUCE the new *Let's Talk* newsletter. In keeping with the FOH motto, Healthy Bodies, Sound Minds, A Safe Place to Work, the newsletter has expanded its focus to include all aspects of health and wellness. The increased size allows us to provide twice as much content on mental health and wellness topics that can help you and your family be healthier, happier and more productive. One of the most exciting additions to *Let's Talk* is Vitality-on-Demand. Wherever you see the VOD symbol and three-digit code, you can access more in depth information on that topic by visiting www.vitality.com. There you will find a rich archive of articles. VOD is available 24 hours a day, and it's free!

Reducing Stress to Beat Heart Disease

MENTAL STRESS DOES MORE THAN DIMINISH YOUR SENSE OF WELL-BEING; it also can increase your risk of heart disease. "Evidence points to stress as a significant risk factor," says James Blumenthal, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina. Studies suggest chronic stress is a hormonal chain of events that can ultimately increase blood cholesterol and blood pressure, two traditional risk factors for heart disease. In addition, studies show acute stress from catastrophic events, such as an earthquake or September 11th, can trigger heart attacks in people with pre-existing heart disease. Fortunately, you can keep chronic stress from taking a toll on you. Try these suggestions to manage stress and keep your heart healthy.

Downsize Stress

GET PLENTY OF EXERCISE. Stress can affect clotting factors in the blood making it more sticky, thereby increasing your risk of heart disease and stroke. "But evidence suggests physical activity can counteract that," says Blumenthal. For heart health, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity, such as brisk walking, every day or most days of the week.

BOLSTER YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM.

Research suggests that having a strong structural-support network — such as being married, having someone you can talk to and trust or belonging to one or more organizations or a religion— can reduce your stress level and, thus, your risk of heart disease.

SEEK TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY. "Both these stresses can increase your risk of heart disease, or dying from the disease if you already have it," says Blumenthal. Studies suggest chronic anxiety can increase the risk of sudden cardiac death. To reduce your anxiety level, try stress-reduction techniques such as yoga, walking meditation, traditional meditation or guided imagery. Experiment until you find one that works for you. If none of these techniques suffice, ask your doctor about taking medication for anxiety.

Remember your EAP is a resource to help you deal with stress. Call 800-222-0364

In the know

Late-Breaking Health News

More than 28 million U.S. adults suffer from migraine headaches, yet less than one-half seek medical treatment or use the latest prescription medications, according to a study published in *Neurology*. The study found that millions of migraine sufferers treat their pain with over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen and pain relievers containing caffeine (Excedrin or Anacin). While such medications work effectively for many migraine sufferers, researchers recommend medical care for those who experience high levels of pain or significant limitations in their daily activities.

>> Doctor-patient communication represents a vital first step in treating clinical depression. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* revealed that only the observational skills of a physician asking the right questions can ensure a reliable diagnosis of depression.

The World Health Organization estimates that major depression alone was the fourth-leading cause of disability worldwide in 1990, and will soon be second only to heart disease as a disability cause.

No blood test or X-ray can determine whether someone suffers from depression. A trained interviewer must make the diagnosis based on a patient's response to a series of questions. A high percentage of depressed individuals don't mention their depressed states to their doctors or attribute their ailments to feelings of depression. So a third to a half of patients with major depression go untreated.

>> SMOKING IS LINKED TO MORE SEVERE BACK SYMPTOMS. Among people with spinal problems, those who smoke have more severe symptoms and poorer physical and mental health, including a higher rate of depression, according to a report in the journal *Spine*. Researchers analyzed the impact of smoking on spinal symptoms and general health in a group of nearly 25,500 patients treated for such problems. Symptoms were rated severe in 50 percent of smokers, compared with 37 percent of nonsmokers. Depression was found in 54 percent of patients who smoked, compared with 37 percent of nonsmokers.

If you or a loved one would like information about depression, contact your EAP at 800-222-0364

VITALITY-ON-DEMAND

A world of information available via phone, fax, or computer.

You may think of this publication as just a newsletter. But would you believe it's also an access index to one of the largest databases of family health and personal self-care data around? With our free Vitality-on-Demand (VOD) service, you can get all of the information you need any time you want it!

Look for this symbol **VOD 000** throughout the text for topics you would like to learn more about. Placing your VOD order is simple. And it's free. Via the Internet: Visit our home page at www.vitality.com and press the VOD button. Enter the three-digit VOD number from this newsletter, or you can search by keyword.

SPECIAL REPORTS

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DIGEST

The right way to floss: Take 18 inches of floss and wind the bulk of the thread lightly around the middle finger. Wind the rest around the same finger of the opposite hand. Maneuver the floss between teeth with your index fingers and thumbs. Don't pull it down hard against your gums. Bring the floss up and down several times forming a C shape around the tooth, being sure to go below the gum line. **VOD 051**

Academy of General Dentistry, Chicago, IL.

Time to lighten up. Eighty percent of Americans are overweight in 2002, compared with 76 percent in 1998, 69 percent in 1994, 64 percent in 1990 and 59 percent in 1986.

Harris Interactive, Rochester, NY.

Ninety percent of women who had cosmetic surgery were satisfied with the results, yet their overall body image didn't improve, one study found.

Research at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia.

Substitute spaghetti squash for pasta and you consume 80 percent fewer calories and lots of vitamin A.
Self, 350 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017, monthly, \$15/yr.

Pack a travel-size container of moisturizer or hand lotion in your carry-on bag if you're taking a long flight. The cream can counteract dry air on the plane.
Organize Your Business Travel! by Ronni Eisenberg with Kate Kelly, Hyperion, 2001, \$10.95.

Hold your stretches for 30 seconds if you're younger than 40, but hold them for 60 seconds if you're 40 or older. Your muscles become less pliable as you age, so you need to stretch them longer.
Men's Health, 33 E. Minor St., Emmaus, PA 18098, 10 times a year, \$20/yr.

self-care

Understanding Domestic Abuse

THROUGH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, an abuser establishes power and control over another person. Such behavior occurs when the abuser feels entitled to control his victim. Acts of such violence generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

PHYSICAL BATTERING. The abuser's attacks can range from bruising to murder.

SEXUAL ABUSE. Physical attack by the abuser is often accompanied by, or culminates in, sexual violence, with the victim forced to have sexual intercourse with the abuser or take part in unwanted sexual activity.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTERING. The abuser's psychological or mental violence can include constant verbal abuse, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolating the victim from friends and family, deprivation of physical and economic resources and destruction of personal property. Domestic abuse often begins with behaviors such as threats, name calling, violence in the victim's presence (such as punching a fist through a wall) and/or damage to objects or pets. It may escalate to restraining, pushing, slapping and/or pinching — and, ultimately, punching, kicking and sexual assault. It may even become life-threatening, with serious behaviors such as choking, breaking bones or weapon use.

Abuse Checklist

Study the following questions. Think about how you're being treated and how you feel. Remember, it's abuse when one person scares, hurts or continually puts down the other person. Does your partner...

- ☐ Embarrass or make fun of you in front of your friends or family?
- ☐ Make you feel like you can't make decisions?
- ☐ Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?
- ☐ Tell you that you're nothing without him or her?
- ☐ Treat you roughly — grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- ☐ Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you're where you said you'd be?
- ☐ Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?
- ☐ Blame you for how he or she feels or acts?
- ☐ Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready to do?
- ☐ Make you feel like there's no way out of the relationship?
- ☐ Prevent you from doing things you want, such as spending time with your friends or family?
- ☐ Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you somewhere after a fight to teach you a lesson?

If any of these are happening in your relationship, seek help immediately.

For more information, call your EAP at 800-222-0364 or the Domestic Abuse Project at 800-793-5975. If your life is in danger, call the police or 911.

For your information

Complementary Health-Care News

>> Low vitamin-C concentration in the bloodstream may be a risk factor for stroke, especially in men with high blood pressure or who are overweight, according to a study published in *Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association*.

Men with blood vitamin-C levels in the lowest quarter had a 2.1 times higher risk of any type of stroke compared with men in the highest quarter. The likelihood was higher for men who also had hypertension or were overweight.

Men in the lowest quarter had a daily vitamin-C intake roughly equivalent to the vitamin C in half a glass of orange juice. The vitamin possibly inhibits artery clogging and lowers blood pressure.

>> St. John's wort appears to interfere

with a cancer drug. St. John's wort, often taken as an over-the-counter remedy for mild depression, decreased blood levels of one chemotherapy drug by about 40 percent in a study at the Rotterdam Cancer Institute in the Netherlands. This effect lingered for more than three weeks after patients stopped taking the supplement. The herb interfered with P450, an enzyme the body uses to break down about half of all drugs.

Because of this, researchers believe St. John's wort may inhibit many other widely prescribed medicines, including drugs that treat heart disease and seizures and prevent organ rejection after transplants.

Middle-aged men who are depressed or anxious are more than three times as likely to have a fatal stroke than middle-aged men who aren't depressed. Stroke is the third-leading cause of death in the United States, ranking behind heart disease and cancer. **VOD 053**

American Heart Association, Dallas, TX.

Eating certain fruits and vegetables helps you consume the recommended eight glasses of water per day. For example: A slice of watermelon equals more than a glass of water.

Real Simple, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020, 10 times a year, \$19.95/yr.

For the best results, use the right size stability ball for crunches. Your hips should be no lower than knee height when you sit on the sphere.

Self, 350 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017, monthly, \$15/yr.

Showing their age. Forty-eight percent of baby boomers say the signs of aging they notice first are graying hair and balding; 22 percent, poor eyesight; 13 percent, weight gain; 11 percent, wrinkles; 3 percent, age spots; and 2 percent, memory loss.

Impulse Research Corp., Los Angeles, CA.

Including a verb in your greeting when you answer the telephone helps you sound less harsh." Jane Wilson speaking" or "This is Jane Wilson" sounds better than just "Jane Wilson."

Rules for the Wired by Marjorie Brody, Career Skills Press, 1999, \$8.

Add more fiber to your diet by including a variety of grains. Eat barley, brown rice, bulgur, corn tortillas, couscous, oatmeal, rye, rye crackers, whole-wheat pasta and wild rice.

Better Homes & Gardens Lightstyle, 1716 Locust St., Des Moines, IA 50309, three times a year, \$4.99/issue.



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